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NARCH Evaluation Working Group

Evaluation of the NIGMS Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) Program – Impressions and Suggestions



NARCH Evaluation Working Group

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#Providing additional input and feedback

NARCH Program Background and Structure

- NARCH began in 2001 with the goal of providing American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities control over their own research interests.
- NARCH grants are awarded to federally recognized tribes and/or tribal organizations.
- NARCH is a trans-NIH program managed by NIGMS: in addition to NIGMS, participating ICOs have included NIDA, NIDDK, NCI, NHLBI, NIAID, NIAAA, ORWH, NCCIH, NIMHD, NIAMS, NHGRI, NIEHS, OBSSR, NIDCR, NICHD, and NCRR.
- NARCH subprojects are reviewed and scored separately and can be funded by any participating ICO.

NARCH Core/Subprojects

- **Administrative Core:** Required Core as of NARCH VIII (2014).
- **Research Projects**
- **Pilot Projects**
- **Faculty/Researcher Enhancement Projects**
- **Student Enhancement Projects**
- **Capacity Building Projects:** Added in NARCH VIII (2014).

NARCH: Funding Opportunity History and Timeline



- The NARCH FOA is issued in pairs of overlapping four-year cycles.
 - Historically, the NARCH FOA was not issued every year due to the interagency nature of the program and the complexity of the scientific review and funding processes.
- NARCH I-VIII grants were funded by NIH and managed by IHS.
- NARCH IX and subsequent grants have been funded *and* managed by NIH.

NIGMS NARCH Program Analysis

- NIGMS gathered relevant data and performed an outcomes analysis of the NARCH program [provided by the Division of Data Integration, Modeling, and Analytics (DIMA)].
- The analysis covers all NARCH award cycles.
- Qualitative data analyses were also used to enhance and inform the quantitative data analyses.

Goals of NARCH

- To support health research projects prioritized by AI/AN communities.
- To work toward reducing health disparities in AI/AN populations.
- To promote a cadre of scientists and health research professionals interested in AI/AN health research.
- To enhance health research partnerships between AI/AN communities and research institutions.
- To reduce AI/AN communities' distrust of health research.

Questions the Working Group Considered

- 1. Is the NARCH program meeting its stated objectives?**
The working group agreed the current NARCH objectives are being met.
- 2. Are the current program objectives the correct objectives?**
While the current goals and objectives are appropriate overall, some goals and objectives could benefit from modification.
- 3. Can certain areas of the NARCH program be optimized, improved, or strengthened?**
The working group agreed that certain areas could be modified, optimized, or strengthened.
- 4. Based on the above questions and the data collected, what are some key impressions and suggestions that could strengthen the program?**
Outlined on the following slides.

NARCH: Impressions

1. The NARCH program has changed over time.

- Administrative Core became a required component and Capacity Building Projects were added as of NARCH VIII
- All of NARCH funding and management was moved to NIGMS

2. The NARCH program supports health research projects prioritized by AI/AN communities and works toward reducing health disparities.

- NARCH projects must be supported and prioritized by the AI/AN organization
- Research projects funded by NARCH have examined the most significant health disparities experienced by AI/AN communities – e.g., substance abuse, diabetes, mental health, cancer, etc.

NARCH: Impressions

- 3. The NARCH program has promoted a cadre of scientists and health research professionals interested in AI/AN health research and enhanced partnerships between AI/AN communities and research institutions.**
 - NARCH programs have funded 53 student and faculty enhancement subprojects from the high school to faculty level
 - NARCH grantees have partnered with 22 research-intensive institutions (92% of NARCH awards)

- 4. The NARCH program has likely reduced AI/AN communities' distrust of research.**

(Note: difficult to empirically assess; a modified RPPR using a specific data collection item could help)

 - Almost 60% of the research projects have implemented Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methods, which intimately involves the AI/AN community and has been shown to enhance relationships and build trust

Draft Suggestion 1: Modify Current NARCH Goals

1. To **equitably** support health research projects prioritized by AI/AN communities.
2. To ~~work toward reducing~~ **promote** health **equity** ~~disparities in~~ **for** AI/AN populations.
3. To build capacity and infrastructure within tribal organizations to engage in health research (this is a goal of the current NARCH FOA).
4. To promote a cadre of scientists and health research professionals ~~interested in~~ **committed to** AI/AN health research.
5. To enhance health research partnerships between AI/AN communities and research institutions.
6. To reduce AI/AN communities' distrust of health research. **This is an intrinsically important and valid goal, but there are no clear metrics/outcomes that can universally evaluate this objective for all NARCH awardees.**

Draft Suggestion 2: Increase NARCH Resources

■ Possible Action Items

- Enhance overall funding for the NARCH program, ultimately providing an increase in number of awards
- Add or modify the NARCH funding mechanism to provide a developmental/exploratory mechanism for AI/AN communities to develop increased research infrastructure/capacity and help them successfully compete for NARCH funding
- Enhance NARCH awards by allowing up to \$300K for alteration/renovation resources for AI/AN organizations or TCU partner
- Increase award period from 4 to 5 years, similar to other NIGMS infrastructure and capacity building award programs

■ Rationale

- NARCH grantees have subsequently received \$173.2 million in additional grant funding
- NARCH research projects have involved the development of outcome interventions for AI/AN health disparities over 40% of the time (44 of the 103 projects)
- These combined successes could be further increased with an increased number of NARCH awards and Tribal organizations served

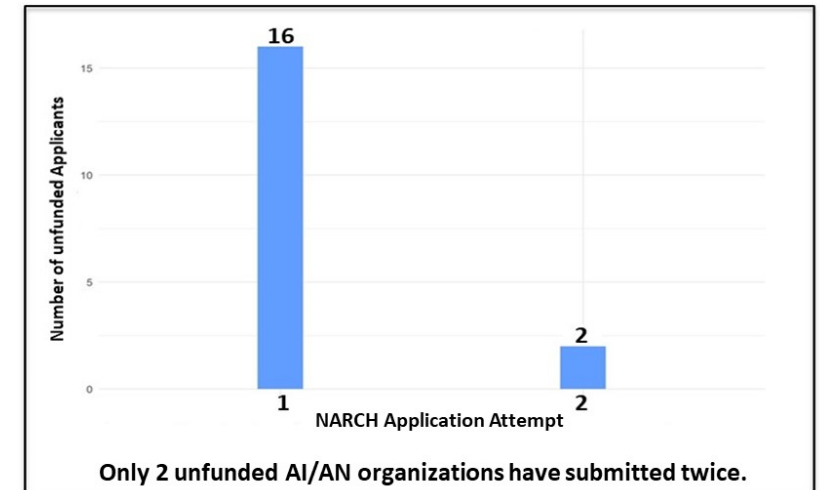
Draft Suggestion 3: Increase Tribal Awareness of the NARCH Program and Improve Communications with Stakeholders

■ Possible Action Items

- Increase NARCH program staffing
- Use professional meetings to increase NARCH awareness, including panels/webinars with successful NARCH PIs
- Go to tribal organization meetings/gatherings and offer presentations on NARCH program
- Engage aspiring PIs and/or researchers from AI/AN organizations to participate in NARCH study sections
- Include a previous NARCH study section reviewer on a subsequent NARCH evaluation panel

■ Rationale

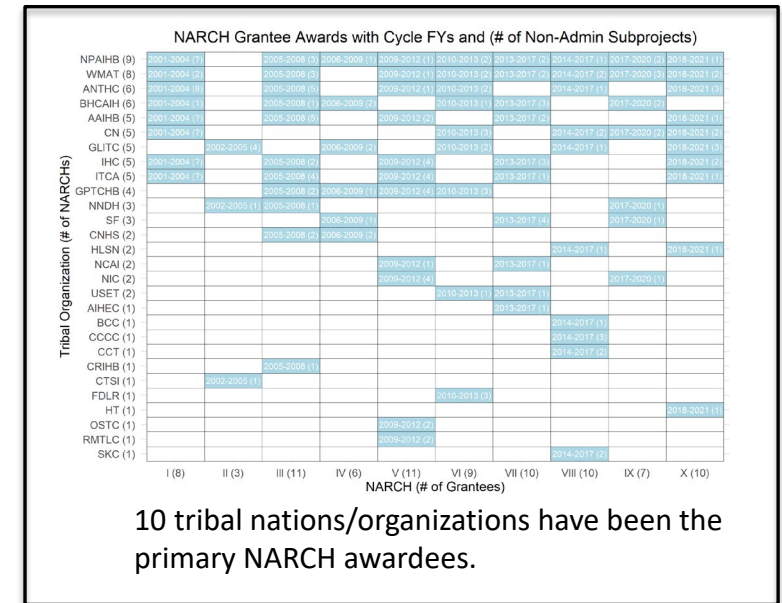
- There are only two NARCH program staff to oversee the current program. More personnel will be required to accommodate the increased outreach and additional funding mechanisms proposed
- Although funding rates of first time NARCH proposals is high (75% or 21/28), only 2 of a total of 18 unfunded applicants have applied for funding a second time



Draft Suggestion 4: Modify the award mechanism to enhance awardee diversity and develop mechanisms to better assess NARCH outcomes

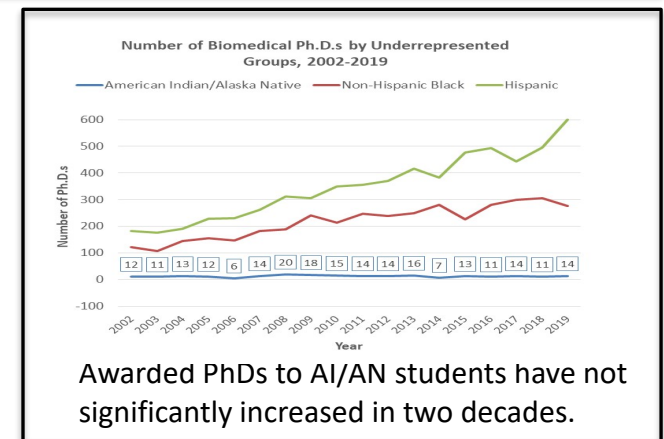
■ Possible Action Items

- Increase diversity of tribes and tribal organizations that are recipients of NARCH awards by providing other type(s) of award mechanism that could allow previously unfunded organizations to compete separately from prior NARCH awardees
- Reach out to earlier stages of the educational continuum to enhance interest in STEM, research careers, and healthcare professions and add K-12 outreach as a specific developmental subproject option in a new NARCH FOA
- Modify RPPR to better align data collection items with proposed objectives



■ Rationale

- There are 574 recognized tribal organizations in the US and historically only 10 tribal organizations have been the primary NARCH awardees
- The rate of PhDs awarded to AI/ANs has remained stagnant for the last 20 years; this suggests we need to build a more extended pipeline of students



Working Group Summary

- **NARCH is currently meeting its goals**
- **The current goals, however, should be re-examined**
- **Add resources and additional award mechanism(s) to promote a more diverse portfolio of grantees**
- **Ensure that specific outcomes can be appropriately assessed and are aligned with the goals of NARCH**